



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### FLOOD WATERS DAMAGE FEDERAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

Unprecedented high water in the streams of the Dakotas and Minnesota and in the northwestern states has been both a blessing and a headache to the Fish and Wildlife Service, Director Albert M. Day stated today.

As Mr. Day explained, water is the life-blood of the Service's national waterfowl refuge program and from that standpoint the refuges across the northern part of the United States are assured of an adequate supply for the coming season. On the other hand, these same refuges have taken the worst beating in their history from rampaging flood waters.

The Souris River in North Dakota and its tributaries, on which are located three of the Service's major refuges, had flood waters unequalled since 1904. On the Upper Souris Refuge is located a major storage dam with a capacity of 120,000-acre-feet. This reservoir furnishes water to maintain optimum water levels in the shallow impoundments below it on both the Upper Souris and the Lower Souris refuges. The city of Minot, North Dakota, is located on the river between the two refuge areas. In recent years the river channel through Minot has been considerably restricted through fill operations by that community so that it will carry safely a maximum of only 2,000 second-feet.

On the basis of watershed snow and precipitation studies, Service engineers anticipated flood conditions and operated the big reservoir as a flood-control project to save the City of Minot from great loss of life and property. Although the Souris River above the reservoir created a 7,200 second-feet, the water passing Minot did not exceed 2,700 second-feet. As the result of the action taken by Service engineers, damage in the city of Minot was held to a minimum. Extensive damage, however, was done to refuge improvements on the Upper Souris Refuge. Letters of commendation have been received by the Service from city and State officials of North Dakota for the manner in which the flood was handled.

The James River in North and South Dakota, on which three important wildlife refuges of the Service are located, experienced one of the worst floods in history. Many refuge dikes were topped on this stream and damages will run into thousands of dollars.

Other refuges in North Dakota and in Minnesota were heavily damaged by floods. Reports are just beginning to come in concerning flood conditions in the Harney Valley in central Oregon where the Malheur Refuge is located. Damage is occurring but the extent will not be known until the floods recede.

Mr. Day said that while the reports coming in indicate extensive damage to refuge dikes and structures, "the record is also full of incidents where such improvements have been saved by the constant vigilance of refuge personnel. Constant inspection, plus a willingness on the part of Service employees to turn out at any hour and spend many hours of volunteer overtime has resulted in a most substantial dividend of minimized damage."

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